

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4117

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

ALL OTHER CANADIAN CONSULS (BY POUCH)

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: EAIR, CA, ELAB, PINT

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: BILINGUALISM AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

REF: OTTAWA 6019; A-212, JULY 13, 1977

1. REACTIONS TO DATE RE THE INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION STUDYING SAFETY OF INTRODUCING BILINGUAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SERVICE IN QUEBEC HAVE BEEN SURPRISINGLY MILD. ONLY THE CANADIAN OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION (COPA), REPRESENTING PRIVATE PILOTS--PRIMARILY ANGLOPHONES--HAS BEEN STRONGLY NEGATIVE AND THIS GROUP IS NOT A MAJOR POWER FACTOR. GENS DE L'AIR HAS CONFINED ITSELF TO REQUESTING RECONSIDERATION OF CONTINUED BAN ON BILINGUAL VFR OPERATIONS AT MIRABEL AND STATING ITS CONCERN ABOUT A PARALLEL MOT PROPOSAL TO BAN ALL VFR OPERATIONS AT MIRABEL. THIS LATTER VIEW SEEMS ALSO TO UNDERLIE THE COPA POSITION AND RESULTS IN MIXING THE LANGUAGE CONTROVERSY WITH THE MORE GENERAL NORTH AMERICAN DEBATE RE THE SAFETY OF COMINGLING GENERAL AND COMMERCIAL AVIATION AT LARGE AIRPORTS. LIKEWISE, REACTION OF

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CANADIAN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT LIVINGSTON TO INTERIM REPORT HAS BEEN POSITIVE. THERE HAS BEEN NO REACTION TO DATE FROM THE CANADIAN AIRLINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION WHICH WENT ON STRIKE LAST SUMMER OVER THIS ISSUE. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT BODY IS NOT LIKELY TO GET INVOLVED AT THIS STAGE AND PREFERS TO HOLD ITS FIRE UNTIL THE FINAL REPORT DEALING WITH IFR

OPERATIONS IS OUT.

2. COMMENT: IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE COMMISSION'S INTERIM REPORT IS A VERY VALUABLE DOCUMENT IN THAT IT ANALYZES AND EVALUATES MANY OF THE TECHNICAL POINTS THAT HAVE COME UP IN ARGUMENTS BETWEEN PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF BILINGUALISM. THE COMMISSION HAS ALSO TAKEN AN EXHAUSTIVE LOOK AT THE SITUATION IN MANY COUNTRIES WHERE TWO OR MORE LANGUAGES ARE USED IN ATC AND HAS FOUND THERE IS NO INHERENT SAFETY HAZARD IN THESE EXPERIENCES. THUS, THE ARGUMENT IS MOVING FROM THE EMOTIONAL ARENA TO THE TECHNICAL ONE AND POLITICAL COMMENTS TO DATE SEEM TO REFLECT THIS.

3. IT WILL PROBABLY BE AT LEAST A YEAR BEFORE THE COMMISSION ISSUES ITS FINAL REPORT AND DEALS WITH THE IFR SITUATION. IN THE MEANTIME, THE MOT SIMULATOR TESTS AT HULL, QUEBEC ARE WELL UNDERWAY (BUT WITHOUT GENS DE L'AIR PARTICIPATION) AND TCO HAS BEEN INFORMED BY SENIOR OFFICIALS THEY REVEAL MANY HAZARDS BASED ON CONTROLLER SHORTCUTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ENGLISH-ONLY OPERATIONS. NO EVIDENCE APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING THAT THESE HAZARDS--WHICH REQUIRE CORRECTION IN THEIR OWN RIGHT--WILL BE MULTIPLIED BY INTRODUCING FRENCH INTO THE SYSTEM. MOT OFFICIALS PLAN TO BRIEF FAA COUNTERPARTS ON THEIR FINDINGS IN THE FALL WHEN MORE EVALUATION OF THE DATA HAS BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMPLETED.

4. WHAT APPEARS LIKELY AT THE MOMENT IS THAT THE COMMISSION WILL RECOMMEND FULL BILINGUALISM (VFR AND IFR) IN THE MONTREAL AREA AND SIMULTANEOUSLY MOT WILL BE ATTEMPTING TO CHANGE WORK HABITS OF CONTROLLERS. LATTER WILL PROBABLY RESIST THIS STRONGLY AND ARGUMENTS RE UNFAIR DISCIPLINARY MEASURES WILL BE MIXED UP WITH ARGUMENTS OVER BILINGUALISM TO CREATE A CONFUSING SITUATION CAPABLE OF EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL EXPLOITATION. A BAN ON GENERAL AVIATION VFR OPERATIONS AT MIRABEL WOULD ALSO GENERATE ITS OWN REACTION AND CONFUSE THE ISSUE FURTHER AS COPA INTERESTS COULD MAINTAIN THIS WAS BEING DONE TO ALLOW IFR BILINGUALISM AT MIRABEL. DUEMLING

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